

UNPRONOUNCABLE NAME
Ezekiel 33:11

by Willis E. Bishop

My Bible in Ezekiel 33:11 reads, in English: "As I live," says the Lord GOD - capital L small ord - capital G capital O capital D.

I want to attempt to simplify the Old Testament use of some of the terms for God.

1. There is the very common use of the term "Elohim" (used also of false gods, with small "g") and translated God, with a capital G. See Ezekiel 31:8, 9.
2. There is the term "adon" (lord), used of persons, and "Adonai" (usually plural) - used in reference to God; e.g., "Lord" in Ezekiel 33:11.
3. A third important term is represented in Hebrew by four letters: יהוה read from right to left: (1) Yod, (2) He (pronounced "hay"), (3) Waw, and (4) He (See your Bible, Psalm 119, the letters (1) between verses 72 and 73, (2) between verses 32 and 33, (3) between verses 40 and 41, and (4) again between verses 32 and 33.)

Note (a) - The original Hebrew text was written without vowels. Pronunciation came from memory and recognition. (Compare the addresses in our phone books, or try "Kssmm, Flrd".)

Note (b) - The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek inaccurately translated Leviticus 24:16: "And he that names the name of the Lord let him die the death." [Emphasis mine.] Therefore, the Jews prohibited its utterance.

Note (c) - So when the Jews came to reading audibly the four-letter word (the "Tetragrammaton"), they pronounced instead the word "Adonai" or "Lord" (see 2 above).

Note (d) - Thus, the actual pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton was lost. Some translators, in an endeavor to suggest the vowels, now translate it to either "Jehovah" or "Yaweh". (The different consonants are due to the dual use of those letters in Hebrew.)

Note (e) - Other translators continue to reflect the Jewish way of reading the Tetragrammaton by translating it all in capital letters; e.g., "LORD". Therefore, when you see this you know what is behind that translation.

Note (f) - However, sometimes a Bible writer chooses to combine some of the names for God. This works all right in such instances as "Almighty God," "Everlasting God," etc. But when the combination is "Lord" ("Adonai") and the Tetragrammaton, the translation on the practice of Note (e) would read "Lord LORD".

Note (g) - The translators have eliminated this duplication by translating "Lord" ("Adonai") as "Lord" (capital L small ord) and the Tetragrammaton as "GOD" (all capital letters). We find this in many verses of Scripture (such as Eph. 33:11).

Observation 1: Any appearance of LORD or GOD (in all capitals) represents the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew.

Observation 2: In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament the Tetragrammaton is sometimes contracted to "Yah." Translators are not consistent. Some simply translate it as "LORD"; others occasionally use "Yah." (See Psalm 68:4 in the New King James version.)

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